

JOHN NOEL
CLASS I SCENIC – RECREATIONAL STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Hickman

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Bon Aqua Springs

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Western Highland Rim

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

ACREAGE: 35 Acres

YEAR DESIGNATED: 2007

DESCRIPTION:

John Noel Natural Area at Bon Aqua is a 35-acre area located in Hickman County. It supports a small remnant forest that has old growth forest characteristics. The forest has a diversity of species including towering white oak trees with extraordinarily large diameter trunks. The white oaks are a dominant canopy species here and are estimated to be more than two or three centuries old. Their monetary value as veneer quality wood is why stands of white oak trees of this stature long since disappeared from our landscapes. A mix of other impressive size and old age-class trees are found in this forest. Tulip popular trees, along with various species of hickory and other oak species are also impressive size trees. This white oak mesic forest community includes sugar maple, American beech, ash, persimmon, cherry, elm species, and sassafras. Another interesting component of this forest is umbrella magnolia (*Magnolia tripetala*), which is a relatively uncommon species on the Western Highland Rim but is abundant here in the understory. Other shrub and understory species include flowering dogwood, American holly, black haw, spicebush, redbud, pawpaw, hop hornbeam, and hearts-bustin (*Euonymus americanus*).

The forest here also has historic significance. It was once a part of the property where the Bon Aqua Hotel and health spa stood. This enterprise occurred between the mid 1800s to the 1920s. Some ruins of its foundation are still present on the adjacent private property, which today is a National Historic Registry site. This was also the location for the first meeting of the Tennessee Bar Association in 1882. It is likely that there was some limited small-scale manipulation of the forest during this time. The forest was said to have had a few small cabins built on it. The natural area occurs on a gentle hill and is mainly flat on top with its sides sloping gently to the north and northwest.

SITE MANAGEMENT - Division of Natural Areas, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access is permitted. There is a small 3 vehicle parking area located just off Old Hwy 46 (see directions below). Beginning at the parking area is a one-mile loop trail that circles though the natural area before leading back to the parking area, providing an opportunity to view the trees for which this natural area was established.

DIRECTIONS: From I-40 exit on Hwy 46 and proceed south 4.8 miles and turn right after the post office on Church Rd. Go 1.5 miles to Bon Aqua, and turn left at the RR crossing and then proceed 7/10 of a mile to the natural area. This road is Old Highway 46.